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LETTER DATED 11 JULY 1960 FROM THE DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
FRANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

New York, 11 July 1960

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a letter, dated 30 June 1960, from General de Gaulle, President of the French Republic, to Mr. Nikita Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and of General de Gaulle's letter circulated as documents of the General Assembly and of the Disarmament Commission.

(Signed) Pierre MILLET  
Deputy Permanent Representative

TEXT OF THE LETTER DATED 30 JUNE 1960 FROM GENERAL DE GAULLE,  
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, TO MR. NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV,  
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR

Mr. Chairman,

As you requested in your letter of 26 June, I have given due consideration, "with understanding and without bias", to the various points you set forth therein.

In the first place, I must tell you that some of your assertions struck and somewhat shocked me. You suggest, in effect, that France's position on the disarmament question, as I described it to you at our conversations in March, and as I have forwarded it in my public statements, has since that time undergone a change. Nothing of the kind has happened; now as before, France believes that the problem of the vehicles for the delivery of atomic weapons must be deemed the crucial one.

The fact that the Soviet Government put that view forward in the new disarmament plan which it proposed at Geneva is therefore in itself in line with our ideas. But that does not mean that France endorses the whole of your plan, which includes many other clauses and, moreover, stipulates, with regard to the conditions to be applied to rockets and aircraft capable of carrying atomic weapons, provisions very different from those which I had envisaged in the conversations in Paris and at Rambouillet.

France is therefore not adopting the new Soviet plan as it stands, but to conclude, as you do, that I have changed my position is wholly unjustifiable. And it is even more unjustifiable to contend that I would reverse my position at the suggestion of other Governments.

The French position is and has always been as follows:

Disarmament should begin with nuclear disarmament, and that disarmament should start with some step that would be both practical and effective. We now know, and on this point we are all in agreement, that it has already become difficult if not impossible to control the total elimination of nuclear warloads and bombs and their reconversion. There are too many stocks in existence and it would be too easy to conceal all or part of them. Moreover, to destroy all rockets and all aircraft and prevent the construction of others would clearly be excessive

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and indeed inappropriate in our century, which is in essence the century of aircraft, of rockets and - now - of satellites.

On the other hand, it would appear that one measure remains possible, and that measure may be decisive: to prohibit rockets and "strategic" aircraft from carrying nuclear warloads and bombs and from being equipped with the necessary devices for doing so. Compliance with this prohibition could be ensured by appropriate control over bases and launching platforms, wherever they might be. If such measures are found to be practicable as we French believe them to be, they ought to be carried into effect promptly lest technical advances bring us to a point where such control will, in its turn, become illusory or impossible. A considerable step would thus be taken towards use of "vehicles" for exclusively peaceful purposes. This is the course which France has proposed and which it is still proposing.

It was in this spirit that the French representative at Geneva asked your representative certain specific questions relating to control, questions to which no reply was ever received as the discussion was abruptly broken off on your side.

You now speak of bringing the question of disarmament before the United Nations General Assembly. That debate would have taken place in any case, as it does every year. But you know as well as I do that such problems can only be studied in a practical way in the much smaller circle composed of the countries which are principally concerned and technically competent. This consideration obviously and primarily applies to nuclear matters, in other words, to the principal issue. In my opinion, therefore, we will at some time have to resume the debate in a group of participants much smaller than the Assembly in New York. I should add that it would undoubtedly be best to do so as soon as possible.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Charles de GAULLE